

PRELIMINARY EDUCATION.*

By LINCOLN COTHRAN, M. D., San Jose.

IT HAS been the policy of the members of the State Board of Medical Examiners to avoid acquaintance or friendship with candidates who come before the board for examination. I am satisfied that every member has striven to ask reasonable questions, to be fair and impartial in his markings. In order to obviate any predilection toward unconscious favoritism of particular candidates, the board has adopted a suggestion of Dr. King to have a box in which candidates drop their numbered papers. This, of course, precludes identification by the examiner of any person by his number.

The labors of the credentials committee have been most painstaking and arduous. The committee not only subjects the graduates of California schools to the closest scrutiny, but it goes into the college records of eastern graduates. This is done by correspondence and telegrams with college authorities, and also by communication with other state boards of examiners, with whom in this respect we have entered into reciprocal relations.

A year's experience as a member of the State Board of Medical Examiners familiarizes one with the deficiencies in those institutions having by state law the authority to confer the degree of "Doctor of Medicine."

The 5 minutes allotted for this paper is too short a time to detail the many faults which have presented themselves before the board. Therefore, the one defect to which I call your attention is the lack of preliminary education on the part of a goodly number who appear for examination before the state board, as shown by and in their examination papers. In these the examiner observes the commonest words misspelled, they being neither according to Websterian standard nor of strictly phonetic type. Here are a few samples taken from papers submitted to me by candidates: "bludvescles," "branes," "tung," "fagocites," "uren." Other examples exhibit a frequent style of virgin originality, such as "spleen," "recktum," "dyafram," etc., etc., orthography that would have made Josh Billings rave with envy. They were not "joshes," however; they were scrawling earmarks of untutored earnestness. Sentences are begun with small letters and ended with commas or semicolons. Prepositions and adjectives occurring in the middle of a clause are garnished with capital letters. Paragraphing is bounded only by the limits of the foolscap sheet upon which it is displayed. The opulence of spelling is sometimes surpassed by poverty of diction which would amuse 10-year-old children in primary schools.

It is obvious that such uncultivated soil is unfit to receive the seeds of medical knowledge, since they cannot germinate and fructify into products useful to humanity or beneficial to our profession.

Where lies the blame? These poor possessors of diplomas present themselves for examination and fail to pass. Their indignation is at once aroused, and they, with their Alma Mater, threaten dire disaster to the state board and the law which created it. They do not reflect that the board has but done its sworn duty, nor can they realize at once that they are the deluded victims of criminal rapacity on the part of mercenary institutions which have encouraged them to enter upon the study (?) of medicine with the assurance of speedily becoming doctors.

So long as medical colleges do not reject incompetent material, the condition of illiteracy will ever confront us. In one school of this state it is almost certain, in another it is extremely doubtful that anyone has ever been refused admission owing to lack of preliminary education.

While it is true that some of the very best medical colleges are not affiliated with state universities, and receive no state patronage, the fact remains that each and every so-called diploma mill is under private

ownership and control. The statutes of California in this respect are peculiar. Under them any body of 5 men, not necessarily physicians, may associate themselves, incorporate, form a medical college, elect themselves trustees thereof, perpetuate themselves in office and lawfully confer degrees without even their reference to a faculty. An instance may be found in one of our California schools where the board of trustees consists of but 5 members, 3 only of them being physicians. It is apparent how such a law can be used advantageously for the commercial interests of a college. The only check to its annual output engaging in practice in California, together with that of some eastern institutions of similar character, lies in the faithful discharge of duty by your state examining board. Other states and territories where no test of qualifications exist, and to which these graduates might emigrate, would necessarily suffer by this undesirable addition to their population.

The Association of American Medical Colleges, while providing a standard of preliminary education, has no means of its own for ascertaining that its requirements are carried into effect. A published announcement might wear the robe of snow-white purity. Stripped of the garment it may reveal a form of careless indifference or disclose an utter foulness within.

It was for the purpose of requiring all colleges in this state to comply with the wise regulations of the association, besides affording protection to the public, that the present medical law was enacted. Boards under former laws possessed the same legal power to go behind diplomas and ascertain under what conditions they were granted. This authority, however, was seldom used, and this failure on the part of the boards was, no doubt, the main cause which led the profession of this state to rise in its majesty and legislate both boards and law out of existence by creating a new statute.

It is far better to have no law than one not enforced. It is to the State Board of Medical Examiners that we are to look for the fulfillment of the law. There ought to be no antagonism between colleges seeking to do right, and the state board. Working in concert, all reforms prescribed by the association of colleges can be readily accomplished, while any disreputable element will sooner or later meet its fate. The board must be, and aims to be just. It should be remembered, however, that it is not to any faction or to the numerous medical colleges that the board owes allegiance, but to the whole medical profession and the people of the state of California.

DISCUSSION.

Dr. John C. King, of Banning, called attention to the influence of state boards in elevating the standard of our medical colleges, and referred to the fact that the Supreme Court, in its decision, recognized this influence. He spoke of the rapid increase in the number of colleges and of the attending competition among them, which had resulted in the admission of immature material and the graduation from them of inadequately prepared men. This condition of things, he claimed, had originated the demand for examining boards. The profession and the public claimed protection from the colleges. In his opinion the most important function of the state board is its reflex influence upon the college, obliging the latter to maintain the spirit of the standard established by law.

Dr. Walter Lindley, Los Angeles, said: As a member of the faculty of one of the medical colleges of California, I speak for myself, and I believe that I speak the sentiments of all of our faculty in saying that we rejoice at the thoroughness of the work of the State Board of Medical Examiners. No college that is doing clean, thorough work, objects to having the credentials that it has on file examined. The college that objects is the college where such examinations are most imperative, and the college that

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does not object will be benefited by the suggestions and comments of the members of the state board.

I have just returned from the meeting of the Association of American Medical Colleges in Chicago. There was a large attendance, about 60 colleges being represented. The most important work of the meeting was the discussion in regard to the schedule of hours for the 4 years' course; and the discussion in regard to whether the high school, whose diploma would be recognized, should be required to have a 3 years' or a 4 years' course; also the discussion in regard to the amendment of Dr. Wm. J. Means of the Ohio Medical University: "Time credits for a bachelor degree could only be granted after an examination of the students' credentials by or under the authority of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the city or state in which the college is located, or by the State Board of Medical Examiners, duly authorized by law."

Dr. George M. Kober of Washington, D. C., made the report in regard to a national uniformity of curricula. In this report the committee recommended that 4,000 hours for the 4 years be required as a standard, but that there might be 10% reduction in this number of hours. In other words, that 3,600 hours should be the minimum. The committee suggested that the first year 900 hours should be required; the second year, 905; the third year, 1,075 hours, and the fourth year, 1,120 hours.

The discussion of this report waxed very warm, but the report was adopted, except that the division of hours during the 4 years should be left to each college. This report can be secured by any who are interested, who will write to Dr. George M. Kober, Washington, D. C., asking for a copy.

In regard to whether the high school should require a 3 years' or a 4 years' course, the feeling was most intense, as the members from the southern states maintained that in the south the high schools only required 3 years, and that it would practically discredit all southern high school graduates. After a long discussion, and at times a very excitable one, it was decided almost unanimously that the high schools should have a 4 years' course. I am glad to say that this was settled with the best of feeling—the members from the south deciding that they would require an examination instead of depending upon the diploma. The amendment offered by Dr. Means was also adopted.

Every action that was taken at this meeting was in the direction of raising the standard of medical education, and the standard of medical students. I was glad to hear the State Board of Medical Examiners of California so highly spoken of by the members of the Chicago meeting, and it behooves the State Society to maintain its present commendable position.

REPORT OF THE WORK OF THE BOARD OF EXAMINERS.

By DUDLEY TAIT, San Francisco.

SINCE the meeting of this society at Paso Robles, a decision has been handed down by the Supreme Court sustaining the medical law regulating the practice of medicine in this state. Written in lucid and logical language by Judge Shaw of Los Angeles, and concurred in by the entire court, this document passes upon the constitutionality of almost every section of the law, thus obviating the necessity for considerable special legislation.

The friends of higher education will rejoice over the action of the court in sustaining the truly scientific national standard of the Association of American Medical Colleges, which represents the keystone of the medical act, standard for which we must thank Dr. F. B. Carpenter, justly called the "Father of Our Medical Law." The work of the Board of Medical

Examiners for the past year was characterized by two features: 1st, a strictly legal attitude regarding all problems—consequently the enforcement of the legal standard of educational requirements; 2nd, absolute fairness to all, favoritism to none. Fellow members, as incontrovertible proof of the foregoing statements, we bring you the official minutes of the board, its records and some statistics deduced therefrom.

Statistics:

EXAMINATION RETURNS.

	Passed.	Failed.	*Credentials Rejected
Cooper	40	4	2
Univ. of Calif.	35	2	None
Phys. and Surgs. of S. F.	16	11	13
Hahnemann	7	1	4
Calif. Med. Coll. (Eclectic)	1	3	1
Univ. of So. Calif.	22	4	2
P. C. Reg. Coll. of Med. (Fraudulent)			2
Outside Colleges	110	50	4

Failures, Calif. Grad. 17%; Outside Colleges 30%.

It may be safely asserted that failures of applicants are habitually due to, 1st, the college course; 2nd, and principally the date of graduation of the applicants. Thus, while Eastern and Middle State boards show from 3 to 4 per cent of applicants having graduated five years or more ago, the California board began with 50 per cent, and then gradually descended to 20 per cent of this class of applicants. On the other hand, the proportion of rejections of this class of so-called "old graduates" varies in other boards from 40 to 100 per cent, while in California the average has been 50 per cent. Periodic pleas have been made for the class of elderly practitioners, but the law allows no discrimination, and under the ballot box régime, introduced by our exemplary colleague, Dr. J. C. King, segregation of applicants becomes absolutely impossible. With the ballot box the board no longer examines applicants, but passes on numbered papers. The individuality of the applicant only becomes known after the markings have been passed upon by the entire board and the general averages computed and recorded by the secretary. The degree of importance or severity of a given examination subject is generally determined by one fact; if the examiner in said subject be Eclectic the open door policy rules, and all applicants pass with the blue ribbon. Example: In October, 1904, all the applicants passed in anatomy and obstetrics held by Eclectics, whereas in chemistry, held by a regular, 80% failed. At the same examination the homeopathic examiner in surgery obtained the same percentage of failures as the regular in pathology (26%).

The Eclectics continue to select state examiners from the faculty and trustees of the Eclectic College of San Francisco, and the result is invariably noted in the excessively high markings accorded Eclectic applicants in the subjects held by their sponsors in the board, whereas in other subjects their showing is invariably lamentable. Example: 2 Eclectics were given 100% in several subjects, and even then failed to secure the necessary 75% general average.

The perusal of the official markings in the cases of unsuccessful candidates most invariably shows a deficiency in four or more subjects out of the nine. No applicant ever failed to secure a license on account of deficiency in a single subject. Consequently it may be said that the markings of a single examiner do not materially change the general result.

Example: (Graduates of the University of Southern California.)

RECORD OF FAILURES IN UNIV. OF SO. CALIFORNIA.

No.	Anat.	Phys.	Chem.	Med.	Surg.	Obstet.	Bact.	Mat. Med.	Path.
666 ...	82	82	63	78	78	69	69	69	50
692 ...	75	91	71	80	75	78	62	89	54
695 ...	89	94	62	82	70	76	69	68	58
824 ...	75	66	62	75	77	80	58	69	40

*Irregularities were found in every college in California except the Medical Department of the State University.